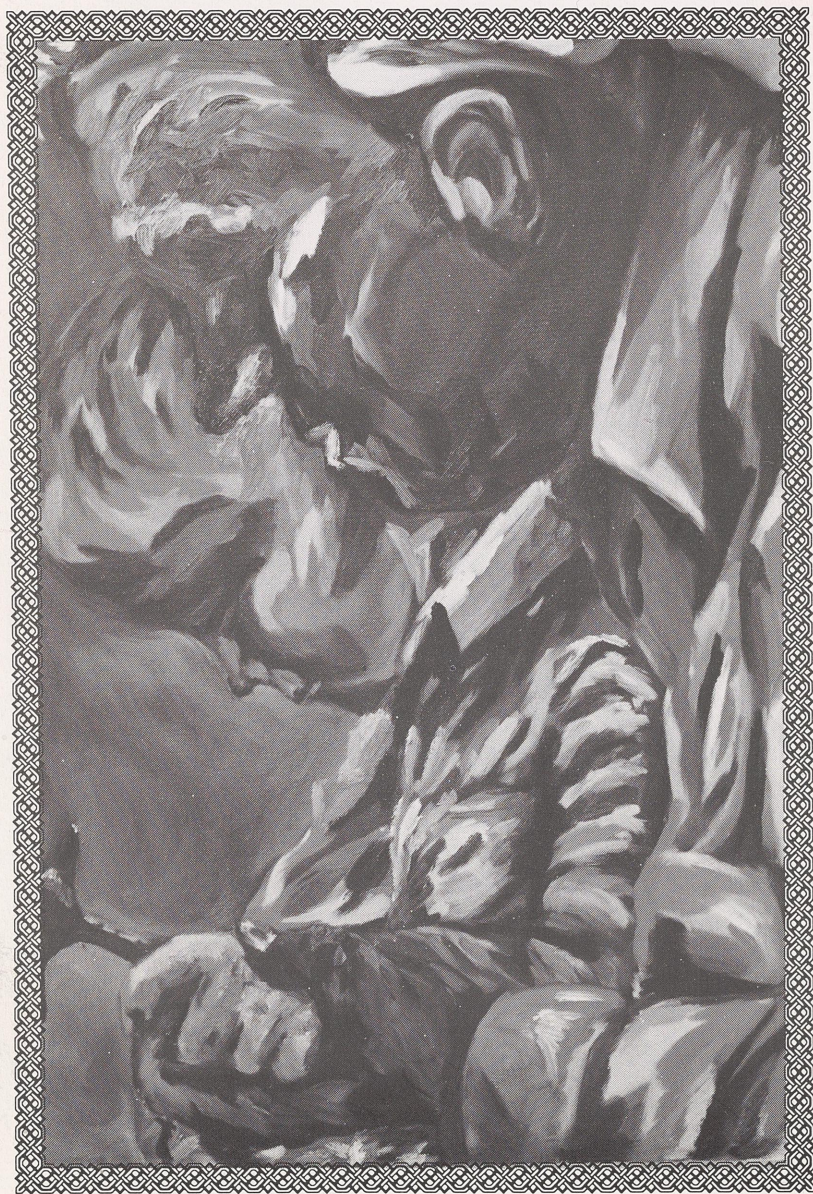


1995

HALLMARKS



SARAH TABER (12)



ALLISON BISHOP (11)

Christina's World III of V

Each little light twinkled like a firefly on a starless night. The band played on the make-shift stage and dance floor. The sound of the fiddles, harmonicas, and guitars floated in the air, mixing with the smell of watermelon and bar-b-que that was being served nearby. Children set off firecrackers that popped and sparkled in the street leaving small puffs of smoke in their wake. It was a happy night.

It was the day before she had turned nineteen, so this was like a birthday party. Her hair was long and tonight it was tied back with a white ribbon. Her mother had made pies for the occasion, as always, so as mother's helper she was glad to be free from the kitchen.

He, of course, was by her side. She liked him. He was nice and honest. He always told her she was special which made her blush and then call him a liar. He would

smile and look down at his feet.

They danced and danced. He wasn't very good, but he knew he was making her happy. The charleston, a dance which seemed to be sweeping the country, didn't even attempt to spread its arms over this small town. That kind of dancing had no appeal to these people, and it seems out of place. After about an hour of dancing, waltzing mostly, he found a table for them. He gladly got her the punch she asked for along with a glass for himself.

She sat at the end of the bench allowing space for any others who might want to sit. He slid in across from her and presented her with the punch. She gulped at first, then slowly sipped. He knew he wouldn't get a better chance.

"It's a great night, isn't it."

"Yeah. They did a good job on the decorations. They're better than they were last year, at least."

"Yeah. Um, you look really pretty. I like what you did with your hair."

"Thank you."

He began fidgeting with his hands, rolling them over and over each other. He felt stupid. He wasn't saying what he wanted.

"Um.?"

"Yeah?"

"Happy Birthday. I know it was your birthday yesterday and I'm sure you thought I forgot because I didn't come by... but I had to work, you know, and I knew we'd be together tonight so I just figured I'd tell you tonight, so, happy birthday."

He gulped hard and looked down at his hands. She knew she had to say something, if only to try to relax him; he had never acted like this before.

"Thanks. That's sweet. No, I didn't think you forgot. I know how hard you work. I had to help Momma with the pies all day so..."

"Um, I got you a present."

"You did? How sweet! But you didn't have to do that; you didn't have to get me anything."

He knew he had to keep this going now. He had chickened out yesterday, and so many days before, but now he had started it. So he took a deep breath, looked up, and went through with it.

"Yeah, well, it's something I've wanted to give you for a long time now, so when your birthday came, it seemed like the perfect chance."

"For what?"

She looked down and saw his knuckles turning white from his squeezing them as he continued.

"For what, well... we've been together a long time, you and me, I mean, and with Dad getting on in years I pretty much run the farm now... and we had a great year this year, you know... yeah well, I just wanted to say, been wanting to say, that well..."

Gasping deeply, he reached into his pants pocket and pulled out a ring which he held between two fingers and stretched it across the table to her.

"... well... I love you and I want you to be my wife."

He smiled; first because he was relieved he finally got it out, and second because she didn't laugh at him. She smiled, and took it in her hand.

Grocery Shopping

In a grocery store known for its elderly and young mothers, sits a six-year old on a bench by the automatic doors. Leaning forward, he straightens his arms and presses his palms against the walnut seat, all the while swinging his legs in time to a song in his head. Against faded blue jeans that are worn to white on the knees, last years orange T-ball jersey stands out vividly. An older, white haired man sits beside the boy who turns and says,

"You know what? I'm going to get some new shoes today. My mom says I can have any color I want, just as long as they got velcro on them. She says I trip over my shoelaces too much."

As the man leans back and takes a sip of his coffee, the boy can't help but turn sideways and stare at the belly and the buttons of the brown cardigan that seems to almost pop off each time the man inhales.

"What color are you going to get?"

"Oh, probably blue. I can't get red because some girl might think it's pink, and my mom says that white gets too dirty. But I could get white if I want to... I'm just not."

"Oh, OK That's good. You sound like a smart boy."

"Yeah, I am. I know a lot of stuff. I even know my address. My mom taught me."

The man tries to act surprised, "Why, that's really good! You do know a lot of things."

The boy pauses for a moment and stares down at his shoes. "Are you married?"

"Why, yes, I am. My wife's right over there... in the bread section, holding up the cheese curls."

Smiling, the man points with his short, pudgy fingers and asks the boy if he himself has a wife.

"Nope," the boy says returning to watch his swinging feet. He doesn't look up as the man sets down his empty coffee cup and crosses his legs. "But I'm going to marry my mom when I get older."

"Really? Isn't she already married to your father?"

"Oh... Well, I guess she is." He looks up and can see straight down the cereal aisle. He starts to hum to himself, almost as if he has forgotten that the man is there. He's still thinking about his mother.

"Well, I guess I just won't get married then. My mom is the only girl that I like."

Crossing one arm over his body so as to prop the other one up, and covering his hand over his smiling mouth, the man replies,

"Your mother must be a real nice lady then for you to want to marry her."

"Yep, she is. She's better than Robert's mom. She lets me eat sugar cereal."

"Really?"

"Yep," The boy says, jumping up off of the bench. "There she is waving at me to come on. You see her? She's the pretty one."

"Oh, yeah. My, she is pretty. You best be getting on over there. I'll see you later. Be good, now."

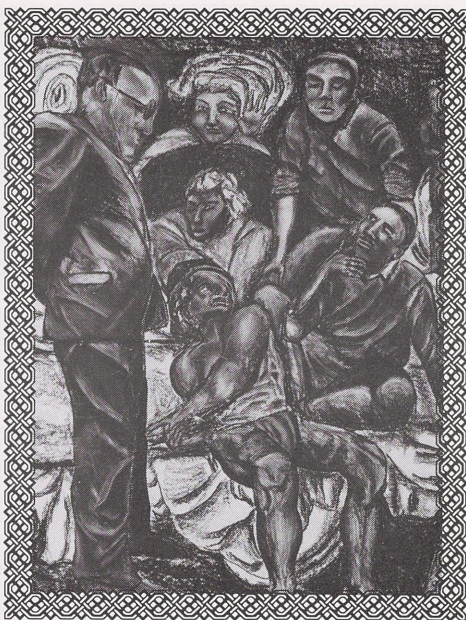
"I will. Bye"

As the boy runs off to his mother and her cart, the man follows their path with his eyes. He then stands up and walks over to his wife who's now in the produce section.

Once He Stood

As half a man he
stands now,
without the protection of his suit.
He never thought that he
would be the one in need.
He had always known
this kind of pain from a distance,
but never amid the anguish
had he stood.
Now knowing
that he can not depart from it
at his leisure,
he kneels at the foot of the
power he once mastered.
He bows
now and begs for his forgiveness;
for he is but a man
in an unforgiving domain.

KELLY JACKSON (9)



SARAH TABER (12)

A Shard of Clay

Through the sand of time we shift
A shard of clay, of yesterday,
A pot or vase or wedding gift
Its purpose faded near away.

But tantalizing clues are found,
Ancient cultures, free yet structured,
Fragment slivers, black and browned
Relics now on which to lecture.

For shards like these used to be
A child's toy, an artist's joy?
All we know of life we see
As broken bits of Rome and Troy.

In long white drawers on museum
shelves,
Gods' parades (the color fades)
Are all we have with which to delve
Into a land of whispers, shades.

JANINE PETERSON (9)



ANJALI SHENAI (12)

Will You...

will you be there when i dye my hair
purple?

when my socks cease to match,
when my laces are not tied,
or when my laughter seems as random
as the rain?

will you be there when i dye my hair
magenta?

when my cloths are not ironed,
when my shirts go unbuttoned,
or when my hands are glued to my new
project?

will you be there when i dye my hair the
brightest blue?

when i can't find my glove,
when i don't care where my coat is,
or when i sing amy's songs just a little
off key?

will you be there when i dye my hair
dark dark red?
when i am mad and just don't know
why,
when i want to rant and rave,
or when i cry for a broken trinket?

will you be there when my hair is just
brown?
when i don't feel like being different,
when i am tired of fighting,
or when i just want to be held by you?

MARY MICHAEL JOHNSON (10)

"Corpses"

Four boys in a row, four sophomore Hillsboro boys leaning their backs against the back wall of my house. If you should look in any skating magazine, any graffiti magazine, even the normal magazine called *High Times*, you would see boys exactly like them: stringy long brown hair or a shaved head, a too-slight build, pants sunk way below each waist with a silver chain hanging off the pocket, and two T-shirts on at the same time. Turn on MTV at ten thirty and you'll hear their voice:

"Huh-huh, she said lay."

"Huh-huh, he said wood."

"This sucks!"

"Huh-huh, that's cool."

Boys across America have embraced this ingenious style of speech. Either they quote funny sections of the show at each other or imitate what Beavis and Butthead would say, should we be graced by their presence. It seems impossible to get three sentences by them without a reference to Beavis and Butthead. Conversation with these boys is limited of course. They talk about going tagging, about TV shows and music, about various drugs, about skipping school, about how cool my dog is. I'm vaguely afraid they will get some Butthead-like idea of how to torment her. They've already desecrated my poor teddy-bear by smushing its head in, although I suppose that was my fault for saying, "Hey, look what you can do to this bear!"

I sit in the wet grass, wondering why four boys, three of whom I don't know, are at my house. I wonder why I am spending this day from my Spring Break being hostess to my friend and his three friends, why they have come to my house to spend their truant time. Part of me is flattered that I am accepted as cool or generous or interesting enough to hang out with. Another part is extremely nervous that my mom will come home unexpectedly or that they'll break something. I also feel stupid that I can't talk about tagging or skipping school, that I haven't even heard of some of the drugs they casually name. (Nevertheless, I am content that I do not know any Beavis and Butthead by heart!) But mostly, I'm enjoying studying these boys, watching them, like some undercover sociologist.

They move with the same gestures, cock their heads at the same angle, laugh at the same things. They do not seem to have ambitions; they do not think of the bad things of the future or the things they regret from the past. They pretend to dislike thinking: stupidity is praised if it's the right kind. They are dressed exactly alike, they talk exactly alike.

Something is wrong with them; they are dead. The spirit and wildness of young men has been tamed into this stupor. It's as if their spirit has transformed into their fleshy bodies, and their bodies into the clothes they wear. Their clothes are the corpses; their laughter is the death certificate. Like the dead, they don't care about the future, and they remember only what is pleasant about the past. Like the dead they have no respect for their bodies or other people. These boys are too concerned with appearing cool and pretending not to be interested in subjects beyond the comprehension of their friends. In this way, they have smothered the spark of life inside their minds.

My eye is caught; I look up and see one of them smiling, but with a fierce burning sense of life. The sun has shafted down onto his hair, highlighting the red glints and seemingly setting his head on fire. He is a little more talkative than the others, and stands a bit more upright. Somehow, he is not a walking corpse like the other three. In some way, I know that he is not dead, that instead he is ablaze with passion and anger and rebellion and all those boyish emotions. How he escaped the doom so common to so many of America's youth is intriguing to me. His motions, desire to make others laugh, easy acceptance of circumstances, his dress, his speech are all like the other three, like the other thirty million in America. Yet, somehow, he has an interest in what goes on around him; somehow, he is alive.

I turn my head from the survivor to look at my friend, the one of the four that I knew before today, and watch the fleshy hands pull out a cigarette. "Anyone got a lighter? Gimme yours, Chris." He casually lights it and inhales. "Screw this."

"Huh-huh, you said screw."

Nesting Doll Dream

I am in my car.

DaVinci's shadows breathe in and out,
trudge over our white bodies, over,
sleeps in the trench, deep moat of your back,
parallel wall to the ceiling.

Your soft rocking brushes my eyes down, like the
Sandman.

I am tossed in a whirling madness
one cat to another, like a ball of yarn, ragdoll
slick feline faces, familiar ones
blurred in crowds of screaming flesh,
under the white tent, tables-people
stuffing their mouths; I stuff down that
shoving deep into my depths.
None of it's true.

Until that bitch comes.

She sits at my table in her white suit,
says she saw a corpse in a car,
giggling.

"You will die too," I screamed inside my head
spinning head in a spinning place,
reeling on this intoxicated axis of revolution.

"His skin was almost blue, white-blue,
his eyes were open, like--"

Her Neo-Classic pink lips moved,
Fluorescent, intestine magenta movement
clear along this tempest.

"That was the one I loved!"

I stopped her Neo-Classic lips midway.
I saw her bloody heart down there.

Vomit rose inside me.

Running from those lips, falling over tables,
chairs, eyes, staring at the mad woman
I am.

My eyes hurled these tears of vomit.
perils of the passion and pain and pain
burned me with their screams,
echoing, ricocheting off the walls of my head.
No after no released from hell to stop rape-
destruction of soul end faith and eros.

Forcing those eyes open

like cold, echoing, sliding jail walls,
I see you.

I squint and open, close and open -
"It's you. You're alive. Thank God. you're alive."
Release.

Bare arms to squeeze a naked neck.
To pull down the white muscles into me.
Harder.

"Of course I am"

God, I love him, love him loving me.

I am in my bed.

7:15, light is pouring around the pulled shades.

I squint to see memory of the subconscious.
wishing dreams to truth.

Not the dreams inside the dreams
Not the doll inside the doll inside the doll,
where the echoes of the grave hide, waiting -
almost drowning the mortal, angelic cry of the now.
Circle back - find the unopened present.

VARINA BUNTIN (12)

Abandoned Angel

I walked by an open door,
wooden, cracked, thick, wet,
and from behind it floated
the bitter sound of a child
mourning, somber, lost,
and she was dirty,
cheeks stained with the grey
tint of her life,
the same color of the walls,
the sky, the light.
and there in the dark
leaned this weeping angel on a chair
loudly rocking in silence.
All there was to be heard
was the creak of wood on wood,
the sound of skin on skin,
moan on moan, death.

"Mama, mama..." she cried.

"Where's my mama?" she asked,
and what could I reply
but extend my cold body
to her, open for her to enter
just as I had entered her home.
She ripped through my skin,
held every inch of me
as if the grasp of her hand
could somehow pull the woman,
mama,
through the dimension
that separate body and soul.
And the tear-scarred cheeks
of the small girl
glistened, glowed
in the greyness
as I weakly turned away and left her.

ANJALI SHENAI (12)



MARGARET WRAY (12)



A.K. DETWILLER (11)

Timeless

The first is the touch you've been longing for, backgrounded by the look in his eyes, the smell of his cologne, and the way his hair looks messedly perfect. He smiles the smile you can hear in his voice on the phone but never get to see. Then, as your mind spins like a dandelion seed in the wind, he pulls you close again. Your blood boils like lava flowing to escape its cold stone container. The detail of the moment disappears and soon the only thing in your mind is him as you enjoy silent bliss again and again. Later, happily out of breath, you return from your timeless moment to the reality of curfews, parents, and the rain now pouring down from above. You run to your car, to play 'your song' and think of him, now out of view, of this night, and of all that led up to it. Reduced again to midnight phone calls, you take your last glimpse of his tail lights, remembering the singularity and sweetness of that first kiss, momentarily forgetting everything that followed it.

JENNIFER CRANTS (12)

To My Parents on the Eve of My Seventeenth Year

Sixteen years ago today
And seventeen tomorrow
You gave half of your hearts away;
Formed one, for me to borrow.
Today I lend you back your hearts
To reunite their beat,
As each heart to the other imparts
Its best half, mingling sweet.

SARAH CHISOLM (11)



JESSICA TUCKER (10)

Henry's Reflection

I

...A calling to wake the neighbors,
you say: "I will be famous someday."
Is that what he said.
He that immortal chanticleer?
calling us to wake
to be alive.
But who is alive he asks.
How can I look you in the face.
Your reflection of his face?
How can I look in your face
My dead eyes meet yours
so alive?

Am I among the mass whose lives
remain quiet and desperate?
No, I am the writer;
you are a shadow of one.

I see you and him fishing
side by side by the lapping tongues of Walden Pond
You and he chat
But chat only with yourselves.

I envision you leaving me,
You said you would,
To live alone in nature
like it's so easy.
You, two, believers in simplicity
It's not that simple.
You leave to go build your home.

I love you for that.
for your simplicity, your honesty.
Your Faith that you can be that
But where does that leave me?
without you.
As you go into the woods
And I am left behind.
Take me with you, but you can't.
I am not simple..
You strive for simplicity:
I make life complex.

II

The teacher taught me
Prelapsarian belief, she said.
Like Thoreau: he climbs back through time,
on hands and knees like a child,
paddles the Roman river,
until with his hands on the edge
Raising his dusty head until his eyes just reach
peering over into Paradise.
He sees Adam and longs to move into him.
He thinks this place is simple.

But he forgets, as you have,
Eve.
He loved her, despite what she did
will you make that same mistake
or tell me, some teacher, is love a mistake?
she stole the simplicity,
The Paradise, the Walden from him.
You can't go back now.



KATIE STEVENS (11)

You know about me;
 It's never going to be the same.
 You never wanted to grow up -
 You are afraid.
 Your eyes have witnessed the shattering of your life.
 Of course you want to go back
 Of course, when you get older, you'll realize you can't

III

You laughed at me at Christmas
 when I gave you a copy of Walden.
 You wouldn't read it,
 for a while.
 He reached deep to find his intelligence.
 You don't reach deep enough yet.

He said life is a gift of God.
 You wish for death.
 But haven't we all.
 We men of lives of quiet desperation.

You grope for simplicity,
 so you shove away thought.
 But to understand, you must think.
 Don't float through, fearing.
 Don't get lost in the night
 That surrounds you.
 The stars are there.
 The stars are but night suns.

VARINA BUNTIN (12)

Medusa: on the Wind

He came to seek your treasures great,
Although your lair's ground did quake.

He heard of men young and old
Who sought your riches brave and bold.

So upon the wind he did sail
For he knew he knew he could not fail.

His gods were with him in the air
And they were kind, just, and fair.

When he reached your island caped in black
Did he ever once look back?

Or did he without fear or fright
March onward toward his deadly plight.

When he heard your music soft and sweet
Did he beg his life at your monstrous feet?

I wonder if he died for you
And your serpentine head,
And if he's just a statue now
Among the other dead.

KELLY JACKSON (9)

Harmony

When the darkness and the light are one,
and the winter storms and fierce heat are gone
Then there will be harmony.

When the powerful lion and the meager mouse have found peace,
and the dolphins swim in clear unpolluted waters
Then there will be harmony.

When man and woman can come together
with total love until death do us part,
and when people do not have to worry where they live day to day
Then there will be harmony.

And finally, when enemies can come together without hate,
and the white lilly blooms eternally
Then there will be harmony.

BECKY MCKAY (10)

At Seventeen

Who wants to hear the saga of seventeen?
Tuesday night spent wishing for Friday
And Friday spent wishing for some meaning?
Phone calls to the empty college dorm
where the one time ex, present day love, and future breakup
leaves his machine on,
just for you?

Who'll listen to wishes for eighteen and twenty-one?
Contemplations that only "years" bring life excitement,
and the trouble of loving boys
whose sexual peaks you get tired of fighting?

It's not meant to be about the year you go off Prozac.
Or the day you cry over a grandmother,
dead for over a decade.
It shouldn't give you guilt
over all the poems you've written about a retarded brother,
And all the praise you've received because of them.

At seventeen,
you should own every cliché about hope that's ever been taught.
At seventeen,
you can't listen when people tell you the world's getting worse
just as you're ready to enter into it.
And at seventeen,
when late at night you realize
how you'll be alone in a year,
Someone
should want to hear the saga.

LACEY GALBRAITH (12)



VADIE TURNER (12)

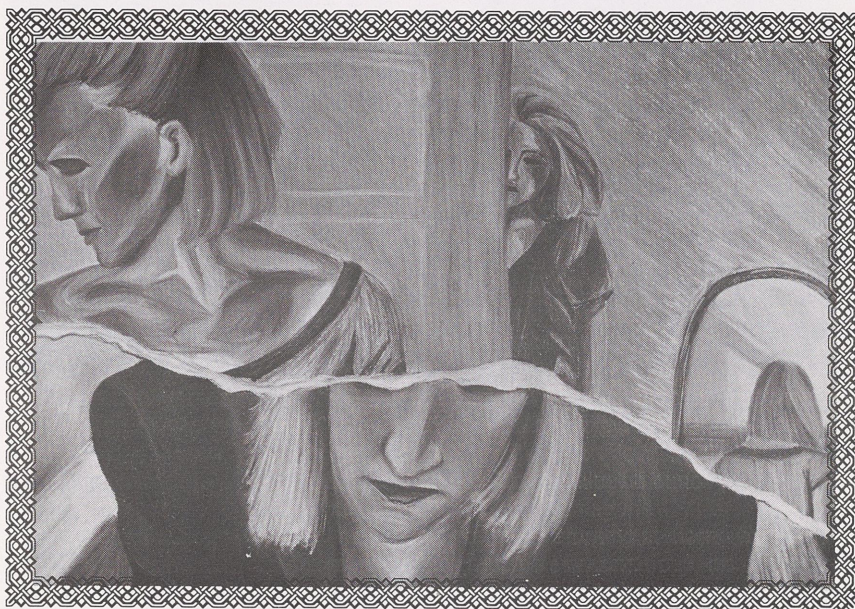
The Chair I Am

I remember the first time I saw it: it was just a white shape on the side of I-65 south. As I drove closer I saw what it truly was, a white plastic chair. The chair was mass produced, made of shiny white plastic. It was the kind of chair that my mom and I purchased at Target last summer, in the patio furniture department.

I drove by this chair every night for a week. Every time I saw it, a variety of images sprang to mind. I could see the chair flying out of a beat up pick-up truck with a rebel flag license plate and a red-neck driver, or I saw the chair topple off an open flat bed trailer. The trailer was towed by a small compact car driven by a young newly-wed couple, heading south to start their new life together.

As I passed the chair I wondered if the red-neck noticed the chair as it flew out of the junk filled bed of his truck, or if he was too busy checking out the chick in the Trans Am in the lane next to him. I wondered if the young couple was heart broken when they realized that one of the few precious pieces of furniture was gone. They probably didn't realize it fell as they drove down the road with their heads filled with dreams of their new lives together.

One day, while driving that road, I realized that chair was gone. Possibly it was picked up by a road crew or just someone in need of another plastic chair for their patio. I often wonder if its original owner felt the loss of the chair. If they realized it was gone? or if they even cared? Then I asked myself, what if I were that chair lost on some distant highway? Would the one who lost me notice I was gone? Would they retrace their journey in order to find me – lost, alone, cold, on the side of some unknown road?



JENNIFER LaRUE (10)

Christina's World

IV of V

The world looks so vast from the porch. The porch faced the family's fields which seemed to stretch to the horizon. The corn was tall and green and when the sun hit the green it made the plants look shiny and yellow.

She sat in Momma's rocker and let the summer heat linger all around her. Dad's rocker was beside her, empty, as were all the other chairs and the porch swing. There was a seat for each of us.

Momma was in the kitchen putting the final touches on tonight's dinner. On the porch, she could hear the song her mother was half singing, half humming.

Third in seniority, and the oldest daughter, it was her job to take care of her younger brothers and sisters. As only Daddy could control her two older brothers, she took care of the four other children, two boys and two girls. They were off playing somewhere, hopefully together, because she had no more energy to chase after them.

She could see her father and brothers out in the field; at least, she could see the tops of their hats. They were hot, she suspected, because she was almost sweating simply sitting still. She could smell her mother's cooking; the apple pie cooling on the sill, the cornbread fresh from the oven, and the chicken stew still cooking, the main ingredient of which had been killed early that morning.

She heard the cluck of the rest of the chickens, the squeal of one of the pigs being tormented by her little brother, and a muffled moo from the barn around the side of the house. She could see the horses in the pen off to the right of the porch, as they shook their heads and swished their tails at unseen flies.

A call to dinner from Momma and the work day was done. Daddy and the boys came in from the fields. The little ones appeared dirty and hungry, and the sun set. She got all the little hands washed and faces cleaned, bows were tied and dirt was dusted away. Days were long, nights were short and life was still remarkable. She would be eighteen next week and almost anything lay ahead of her.



JESSICA TUCKER (10)

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